

- 291 unmarried girls put the brightest outside; married women wear the darkest outside.

521 Undoubtedly the greatest amusement in
517 Cherán is simply talking. Both men and women gather in their spare time and talk by the hour. Most of the talk is gossip. Who has recently done what, the price of corn, the condition of the crops, the change in the weather, forthcoming events, the problems of the church, the progress of the war, what one would do if the Germans came to Cherán—all the everyday things of life and a great deal of speculation about the unknown form subjects of conversation. The North American members of the staff found two questions most common in 1940 and 1941—what were the chances of getting work if one went to the United States, especially since the rearmament program, and what did we think of the progress of the war. Particularly on the subject of the war and its economic repercussions for Cherán did men seem surprisingly well-informed, considering the few who read and the scarcity of newspapers.

538 With all the talk that goes on in Cherán for amusement's sake, one would expect to find an important repertory of tales. This is not the case. No doubt one could collect a body of tales if one cultivated the older people assiduously. The tales that were found were few, and the majority of them circled about hidden treasure. In addition, there were a few dealing with supernatural happenings and some fragments about the founding of Cherán. Even these prosaic stories had to be sought for diligently and were told badly and in obviously incomplete form. Most persons questioned could not recall any specific occasion on which tales had been told, nor did they know any stories themselves. Story telling is not a significant part of the culture of Cherán.

OLD AGE

887 The transition from adult to old age is not
886 a clear one in Cherán. In general, parents whose children are all grown up, married, and moved away from home are not necessarily "old" by Cherán standards. At least one individual apparently over 80 years old was encountered who still did his own farm work, was completely self-supporting, and an inde-

886 fatigable dancer at fiestas. By any standard
887 this man is old, but he certainly shows no sign
of senescence, although it is unlikely he is still
sexually potent. Similarly, women obviously
far past child-bearing age are often the most
active workers at fiestas and the most eager
dancers, in contrast to the often lackadaisical
attitudes of young mothers who dance not at all.

886 For women the menopause comes between
40 and 50. Information from women on
sexual subjects is difficult to secure even by
women, and the scanty information is quite
unsatisfactory.²²

Some women appear to be more or less
spiritless and sad after the menopause, while
others seem to be quite gay. In some cases this
difference may have psychological basis or
may reflect the presence or absence of physio-
logical difficulties. Indifference of husbands,
the sexual potency of husbands, and the con-
tinuance of sexual relations may also have some
bearing on individual cases. At least one
woman expressed herself as pleased to have
passed the menopause because "now she was
free" and was not dependent upon men.
Further study of the problem is needed but
would require considerable time and tact on the
part of women investigators.

888 In general, whether old age is depressing and
unhappy or not seems to depend upon the con-
tinuance of a successful marital relationship
and the possession of adequate economic
resources. The only really unhappy old people
seem to be elderly women without children or
husbands who eke out a miserable existence in
ways that could not be discovered. They dwell
in hovels and lean-toes of brush and boards,
carry their own wood, and to some extent live
on charity. Those with reasonable health and
either dutiful children or enough property to
insure care on the part of the children seem to
lead a fairly satisfactory life. Often nephews
and nieces also help care for old people; again,
possession of property probably aids in securing

²² Early in the study Mrs. Ruth W. Bush, of New York, aided
by the nurse from the boarding school at Paracho and by a Mexican
girl from Paracho, tried to fill out comprehensive questionnaires
on sexual subjects, directed primarily toward gaining insight into
the psychological problems related to the menopause. She was able
to secure only three reasonably complete schedules and even these
probably contain omissions and some unanswered questions. I am
indebted to Mrs. Bush for copies of the schedules and have drawn
upon them slightly for these remarks.